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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NDJAMENA 000894

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/28/2016
TAGS: PGOV PREL KDEM KCRS CD
SUBJECT: CHAD: FRENCH AMBASSADOR BLAMES POLITICAL
OPPOSITION FOR LACK OF DIALOGUE

REF: NDJAMENA

Classified By: POL/ECON OFFICER MICHAEL P. ZORICK, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

SUMMARY:

11. (C) The French Ambassador to Chad believes that none of the actors in Chad's political-military conflicts are willing to use dialogue to reach a peaceful solution to the country's succession problem. Although he believes that the international community must keep up the pressure on all parties to pursue a political compromise, he seemed ready to admit defeat -- not just for his own efforts, but for France's formula for a unity government, electoral and judicial reforms, and eventual opposition exercise of power. He seems to fear that President Deby's manipulations of his political opposition and rebellious countrymen will certainly not solve Chad's problems, but may also feed into the difficulties of implementing the Darfur Peace Agreement. END SUMMARY

PARIS' MESSAGES TO CHAD

12. (C) French Ambassador to Chad Jean-Pierre Bercot reported on the June 15-16 visit to Chad of France's Minister Delegate for Cooperation, Development and Francophony, Brigitte Girardin. He said Girardin's messages to Deby were the same as those she delivered to the political opposition: (a) that Chad had to move forward, and the reality on the ground was that Idriss Deby Itno is in the President's chair; (b) President Deby must offer dialogue to the political opposition -- and the opposition must accept -- without pre-condition; and (c) Chad is on a slippery slope, and a political opening is absolutely necessary if the country is to avoid a much worse situation.

¶3. (C) President Deby apparently responded in the negative to France's current suggestions for an opposition Prime Minister and a national unity government. Bercot reported that his reason was the total incapacity to govern of the members of the political opposition. Deby pointed out to the French that the members of the opposition umbrella group Coordination of the Political Parties for the Defense of the Constitution (CPDC) do not trust each other, do not work together, have no political platform, and present no leader. Bercot said Deby stressed that he did not know what the opposition wanted aside from his departure and the inclusion of armed rebellions in the negotiations, and could not enter into a dialogue with people who gave no reason for discussion.

WHAT CAN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY DO?

¶3. (C) Bercot linked his arguments for international community action to the continued negative pronouncements of Sudan's President al-Bashir on accepting a UN peacekeeping operation (PKO) in Darfur. He pointed out that Deby's conflict with al-Bashir encouraged armed rebels in the East, and intersected with the difficulties of implementing the Darfur Peace Agreement. According to Bercot, this UN PKO would be French President Chirac's last major international effort before he steps down in 2007. With the UK's Prime Minister losing steam, and the Germans focused on their involvement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, only Chirac and President Bush were invested in Sudan. Pressure on Deby to seek a face-saving meeting with al-Bashir at the AU Summit in Banjul, Gambia, was in Bercot's opinion a first

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element to relieving pressure on Deby's eastern flank -- and in getting al-Bashir to move toward accepting a robust UN PKO. In this regard, Bercot said France had recently proposed to the UN Secretary General to provide full logistical supply support to a 500-strong "African Gendarmerie" force to bring security to the refugee and IDP camps in Chad's east, as long as this support was seen as separate from France's bilateral military engagement in Chad.

¶4. (C) Second, the French Ambassador said the main international players in N'Djamena should seek out Deby's so-called Committee of Wise Men (Comite des Sages), under the chairmanship of the former Chadian President, General Felice Malloum. Bercot said he had "sent" the head of the Delegation of the European Commission, Ambassador Robert Kremer, to talk to the Committee, as a way to "de-politicize" France's message that political dialogue will bring the necessary resources to pay for root-and-branch reform of the electoral and judicial systems -- reforms that could bring the political opposition into power behind a parliamentary majority in first half 2007. Bercot specified that France and the EC were ready to fund these reforms right away, through the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

PRESSURE THE OPPOSITION --
BUT IS ANYONE LISTENING?

¶5. (C) Third, the French envoy said Chad's international partners had to put full pressure on the political opposition to accept dialogue with Deby, and to present concrete proposals for change. However, Bercot despaired that there was anyone really capable of having this dialogue with the President. He reported that key members of the CPDC were trooping into his offices seeking visas for travel to France during the critical period leading up to Deby's August 8 investiture for his third term. He suggested the CPDC was falling apart, and that individual members were heading to Europe to talk to France's political opposition, and Europe's human rights organizations, with the messages that France supports a dictator, and the dictator has to go -- but no

political program, and no idea of who would lead Chad.

¶ 16. (C) In the absence of a viable political opposition, Bercot suggested that Deby is seeking to split up the armed rebellions, pulling leadership elements away and into a dialogue -- thus undercutting the political opposition's call for their inclusion at the table. Bercot mentioned specifically his suspicion that Deby is in discussions with the FUCD's Mahamat Nour and his allies. He said the political opposition was thus falling into a trap of their own making, allowing Deby to pick whom from the rebel groups he would invite to the table, and undercutting the CPDC in the process. That said, Bercot did not believe that Deby would talk to rebel leaders coming from his own Zaghawa clan.

DANGEROUS FOR DARFUR?

¶ 17. (C) Ambassador Bercot cautioned that the choices Deby might make in the near future could make it more difficult for the international community to accomplish its aims in Darfur. He speculated that Deby would only reach out to Chadian rebels without roots in his own clan, and noted that at least some of these could be considered "Arab", or at least from northern Chadian clans such as the Tama, who could be seen as having Sudanese backing. He linked them to spoiler groups in Darfur, opposing the DPA. Thus, Bercot expressed the view that Deby's choice of whom to deal with from the groups or individuals involved in westward-facing rebellions could include people tied to eastward-looking DPA

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spoilers. And, where this kind of "opening" to armed opponents in Chad will certainly not accomplish anything in terms of bringing about political dialogue, it may strengthen DPA opponents.

IN THE END, SEEMS ALL
WILL FAIL

¶ 18. (C) Having lined up this constellation of actors and put them into the current context, Bercot finished gloomily with the opinion that the political opposition were trapped by their own refusal to talk, inability to lead, and insistence on having rebels at the table; Deby was trapped by his willingness only to offer empty dialogue, rejection of an exit strategy through a unity government, and complex attempts to manipulate all sides to create for himself a space in which he could survive; and the international community was trapped in having only one game to reasonably play -- that of dialogue toward power-sharing -- but no credible Chadians with whom to play it. He stated plainly that France's ideas for the structure of a transition from Deby rule is dead, since no one had accepted them. "There is no doubt in my mind," he said, "We -- the international community, and especially France -- are a big part of the problem."

¶ 19. (U) Tripoli Minimize Considered.
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